



Monday, March 28, 2011

READ- The Psalter: Psalm 23

The most familiar and beloved of all the psalms, this passage is a tremendous comfort in good times and in times of suffering. The image of God as our shepherd, always watching over us and never leaving us, gives us assurance of God's abiding love for his people.

REFLECT-

- Read the psalm aloud, slowly enough to call to mind the images painted by the psalmist in each verse. Was there a time in your life when this passage gave you special comfort? What words of assurance in the psalm are most meaningful for you and why?

PRAY-

Lord, I thank you for the words of your holy scripture which help us to know you and to feel your love for us. Amen.

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

READ- Old Testament: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

The prophet Samuel must overcome his fear of King Saul, whom he anointed king at God's direction, and now anoint a new king to succeed Saul, who has been unfaithful to God in his later days. God chooses the youngest son of Jesse, David, to be the new king. Samuel is reluctant and resistant, but is finally obedient and God's work is done.

REFLECT-

- God tells Samuel that he does not judge people as human beings do – by their outward appearance or public actions; rather God judges by what is in their heart. Who have you encountered this week who you have judged based on appearances? What can you do to avoid this in the future?

PRAY-

O God, help me to keep an open mind and heart as I try to accept and love people who may be different, disadvantaged or hard to get to know. Help me to see others as you see them. Amen.

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

READ- The Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-14

Paul speaks words of encouragement and warning to the church at Ephesus here. Their culture was steeped in Greco-Roman pagan practices and there was a huge temptation for Christians to stray from the faith into the "darkness". Seeing themselves as "children of light" was an important step to help them hold fast to Christian beliefs and practices.

REFLECT-

- Our culture, much like that in Ephesus, is loaded with "darkness". Temptations swirl about us – drugs and alcohol, sexual promiscuity and deviance, crime, violence, child and family abuse – are all rampant. What tempts you to be drawn into the "darkness" of sin?

PRAY-

Father, please forgive me when I hear the siren calls of our culture of darkness rather than walking as a child in the light of your love. Help me to be strong and to help others remain in your light. Amen.

Thursday, March 31, 2011

READ- The Gospel: John 9:1-45

There are many ironies in this story of Jesus healing a man blind from birth. After he is healed, the religious leaders cross-examine him to learn who did it and how it happened. He then is expelled from the synagogue because of his faith in Jesus as "from God". He is the one who "sees clearly" and the leaders are blind to who Jesus is.

REFLECT-

- In this story, it is those who are outside the established religious community who are able to see and understand God working. What are things in our church structure and methodology that may exclude others and prevent us from seeing and doing God's will?

PRAY-

O God, help me to keep Jesus' priorities first in the way I live. Help us as a congregation to put those priorities first as well. Free us from old habits and close-mindedness that may make us blind to your truth. Amen.

Friday, April 1, 2011

READ- Sermon Text: Genesis 16:7-10

When Sarai cannot conceive a child, she gives her maid Hagar to Abram as a wife. This was a common custom in that culture. When Hagar conceived, things became tense between the women and Hagar ran away. God seeks her out in her desert hiding place and assures her that her son Ishmael will also have a special place in God's plan.

REFLECT-

- God encouraged Hagar to face her difficult circumstances and assured her that good would come from them. She trusted God and returned. Are there circumstances in your life from which you wish to run away; yet you need to face them? God will be with you.

PRAY-

God, help me to trust you. Give me strength and courage for today. Amen.